

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----- 066028

R 092119Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 478
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
USMISSION OECD

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 10602

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG, OPEC, VE

SUBJECT: VENEZUELA AT THE OPEC MEETING

REF: TEHRAN 9718; ALGIERS 3064

1. PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ REMARKED TO ME LAST NIGHT (OCT. 8) THAT VENEZUELA HAD "PLAYED A VERY IMPORTANT ROLE" AT THE OPEC MEETING. HE ASSERTED THAT THE GOV'S "MODERATE" INFLUENCE HAD BEEN A KEY FACTOR IN THE OUTCOME AND THAT HE PERSONALLY HAD TAKEN A HAND IN BRINGING THE SHAH AROUND (APPARENTLY INCLUDING TELEPHONE CALLS) TO ACCEPT THAT ULTIMATE COMPROMISE. THE PRESIDENT AND I WERE UNABLE AT A LARGE PUBLIC GATHERING (THE VENEZUELAN-AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE DINNER) TO PURSUE THE SUBJECT FURTHER.

2. COMMENT: THE GOV IS GENERALLY AND PURPOSEFULLY AMBIGUOUS, PRIVATELY AS WELL AS PUBLICLY, ABOUT ITS POSITION IN OPEC COUNCILS. THE LINE IS THAT THERE MAY BE OCCASIONAL AND TRANSITORY DIFFERENCES OF VIEWPOINT, BUT THAT BASICALLY THE MEMBERS ARE UNIFIED IN COMMON UNDERSTANDING AND PURPOSE. CONTINUED OPEC SOLIDARITY IS THE OVERRIDING VENEZUELAN OBJECTIVE. THE PRESIDENT'S COMMENT WAS THEREFORE RATHER SURPRISING,
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PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF EFFORTS BY PEREZ GUERRERO AND OTHERS

TO DISCOUNT ANY DESCRIPTION OF OPEC INVOLVING HAWKS AND DOVES OR THE LIKE. (PLANNING MINISTER GUMERSINDO RODRIGUEZ CALLED AN EDITOR OF THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DAILY JOURNAL TO DELIVER A REPRIMAND AFTER THAT PAPER HAD SUGGESTED THAT THIS COUNTRY BELONGS TO A MODERATE FACTION IN OPEC.) IT DOES SEEM LIKELY, HOWEVER, THAT CARLOS ANDRES AND HIS COLLEAGUES WOULD NOT BE TOO UNHAPPY IF WE IN PARTICULAR WERE PRIVATELY TO CONSIDER VENEZUELA AS A MODERATE FORCE IN OPEC. IN ANY EVENT, OUR IMPRESSIONS IS THAT THE GOV ROLE AT VIENNA WAS MODERATING BUT NOT NECESSARILY ALL THAT "MODERATE."

3. WITH RESPECT TO THE REFTELS, WE NOTE THAT VENEZUELA HAS CLOSE TO 13 MILLION PEOPLE AND BADLY NEEDS ALL THE PETROLEUM REVENUE IT CAN GET TO FINANCE A HIGHLY AMBITIOUS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM. BUT MOSLEMS ARE NOT IN ABUNDANT SUPPLY HERE.
SHLAUDEMAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PETROLEUM, PRICES, MEETINGS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 OCT 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975CARACA10602
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750353-0362
From: CARACAS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751067/aaaachjp.tel
Line Count: 77
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 75 TEHRAN 9718, 75 ALGIERS 3064
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <08 APR 2003 by SmithRJ>; APPROVED <26 NOV 2003 by MartinML>; APPROVED <26 NOV 2003 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VENEZUELA AT THE OPEC MEETING
TAGS: ENRG, VE, OPEC
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006